

FIRST
PHS SPEECH
AS DASH

LUNCHEON ADDRESS

BY

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(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS)

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE YOUR GUEST TODAY. FOR THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS, I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF MEETING WITH MANY P.H.S. PERSONNEL IN THEIR OFFICES, CLINICS, AND RESEARCH LABORATORIES, SO THIS IS NO GROUP OF STRANGERS TO ME.

AT LEAST, NOT ANY MORE. ALTHOUGH I KNEW SOMETHING OF THE P.H.S., I HAD VERY LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMMISSIONED CORPS. THE MORE I LEARNED, THE MORE IMPRESSED I BECAME. NOW YOU HAVE A VERY ENTHUSIASTIC CHAMPION OF YOUR CAUSE. AND THERE SHOULD BE MILLIONS LIKE ME, BECAUSE WE HAVE ALL BEEN CAUGHT UP IN THOSE EVENTS THAT, AS DR. BRANDT NOTED THIS MORNING, READ LIKE "CAMPAIGN STREAMERS FROM REGIMENTAL FLAGS":

THREE MILE ISLAND... MT. ST. HELENS... FORT CHAFFEE...
THE LOS ANGELES AND TEXAS HEAT WAVES... TOXIC SHOCK
SYNDROME.... LEGIONNAIRE'S DISEASE.... AND SO ON.

YOU HAVE TO BE IN AWE OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT HAS THIS MUCH KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE, THIS MUCH MOBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY, AND ALL IN THE HIGHEST CAUSE OF THE HUMAN RACE: TO HEAL;

YET, IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT THE AVERAGE AMERICAN WATCHING THE TELEVISION NEWS ACCOUNTS WILL SAY, "HEY, CHALK UP ANOTHER

VICTORY FOR THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE." IT'S IRONIC THAT THE SERVICE, LIKE EVERY OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCY, HAS HAD ITS ACTIVE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENTS AND HAS PRINTED COUNTLESS PRESS RELEASES AND BROCHURES AND PAMPHLETS, YET IT TENDS NOT TO GET THE VISIBILITY AND CREDIT IT DESERVES. I WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE THAT IF I CAN.

FROM THIS SIDE OF THE FENCE -- THAT IS, FROM THE P.H.S. SIDE -- THAT DOESN'T SEEM FAIR. FROM THE OTHER SIDE, FROM THE PUBLIC'S VIEW, IT MAY NOT ONLY BE FAIR BUT BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PUBLIC'S VISCERAL DEFENSE AGAINST GOVERNMENT. FOR THE PUBLIC SERVANT, THE NEED FOR RECOGNITION RAISES THIS PARADOX WHICH IS AS OLD AS WESTERN INSTITUTIONS -- AND I'D GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO PERICLEAN ATHENS:

THE PRIVILEGE OF PUBLIC SERVICE CARRIES WITH IT THE
PLEDGE NEVER TO BE THE PUBLIC'S MASTER.

IF THE P.H.S. -- AND ESPECIALLY THE COMMISSIONED CORPS -- DOESN'T GET THE VISIBILITY AND THE CREDIT DESERVES. THAT IS NO REFLECTION ON THE EXTRAORDINARY CALIBRE OF THE SERVICE YOU RENDER THIS NATION. IT IS, RATHER, ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE PUBLIC'S RESPECT FOR -- AND DEFENSE AGAINST -- STRONG GOVERNMENT.

SOMETIMES WE FORGET THAT THE FIRST AMERICAN FLAG WAS RAISED BY LIEUTENANT JOHN PAUL JONES AND ITS MOTTO TAUNTED THE BRITISH MASTERS OF THESE COLONIES. IT SAID, "DON'T TREAD ON ME." THAT FLAG HANGS IN THE SMITHSONIAN AND IS POPULAR WITH EVERY VISITOR. BECAUSE AMERICANS ARE STILL SAYING THAT TO WHOEVER MAY BE RUNNING GOVERNMENT: "DON'T TREAD ON ME."

WHY DO I RAISE THIS NOW? WHY DO I BRING THIS UP? BECAUSE I BELIEVE THIS IS A REAL TESTING TIME FOR PEOPLE WHOSE CAREERS ARE IN THE SERVICE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. WE'VE BEEN IN THIS DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR SEVERAL YEARS -- RIGHT THROUGH A STRING OF ONE-TERM PRESIDENTS, THROUGH GREAT CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE CONGRESS, THROUGH TAX REVOLTS AND OTHER CONVULSIONS AT STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

BACK IN PENNSYLVANIA, DURING THE LAST ELECTION CAMPAIGN, A MAJOR SUPPORTER OF A LOCAL CANDIDATE SAT DOWN WITH THE FELLOW AND CONFIDED TO HIM, "YOU KNOW, YOU'RE RUNNING A TERRIFIC CAMPAIGN AND THERE'S A REAL DANGER THAT YOU'LL WIN."

PUBLIC SERVICE HAS ALWAYS HAD AN ELEMENT OF RISK TO IT. IT'S AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR FREEDOM. BUT PUBLIC SERVICE HAS

ALSO HAD A SIZABLE ELEMENT OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION -- AND THAT IS ALSO AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR FREEDOM.

AND I THINK THAT MAY HAVE SPECIAL MEANING FOR THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, BECAUSE THE QUALITY OF YOUR SATISFACTION IS ROOTED IN A COMPASSIONATE, TOLERANT, AND CARING ATTITUDE TOWARD THE HUMAN FAMILY. THIS NOTION BECAME CLEARER TO ME WITH EACH VISIT TO ANOTHER P.H.S. FACILITY OR STAFF. AND THEN I PAID A VISIT TO THE UNIFORMED SERVICES UNIVERSITY OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES IN BETHESDA, ON THE GROUNDS OF THE NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER.

THERE ARE OVER 400 STUDENTS ENROLLED THERE. THEY ARE FROM ALL THREE UNIFORMED MILITARY SERVICES. AND THERE ARE, AMONG THEM, 23 STUDENTS FROM THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED OFFICERS CORPS. I TALKED WITH 22 OF THEM IN A SERIES OF CONVERSATIONS AND I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU THE MOST STRIKING BIT OF INFORMATION THAT CAME OUT:

ALL BUT ONE OF THE STUDENTS I TALKED WITH HAD HAD SOME EXPERIENCE ALREADY IN PUBLIC SERVICE. THEY HAD ALREADY -- ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE, FOLLOWING THEIR OWN INSTINCTS-- MADE A CONTRIBUTION OF SERVICE TO SOCIETY.

THE EDUCATION THEY ARE GETTING THEY, IN A SENSE, HAVE ALREADY EARNED. IT IS CLEAR THEY ARE MAKING A COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SERVICE THAT IS NOT MADE LIGHTLY, BUT REFLECTS THEIR OWN PERSONAL IDEAS ABOUT HOW THOSE THEY SERVE MAY BE ENABLED TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE ON THIS EARTH.

THE RANGE OF SERVICE EXPERIENCES IS WIDE. SOME WORKED FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS AND CHURCH GROUPS SINCE HIGH SCHOOL DAYS. OTHERS HAVE HAD PEACE CORPS AND VISTA EXPERIENCE. THEY'VE VOLUNTEERED IN CLINICS AND HOSPITALS, WHERE THEIR CAREER OBJECTIVES CAME MORE SHARPLY INTO FOCUS.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT ~~THEIR~~ PRESENCE IN THAT UNIVERSITY HAS AN INFLUENCE THAT FAR EXCEEDS THEIR NUMBERS. THEY COME OUT OF A CIVILIAN WORLD OF PEACEFUL SERVICE AND, AFTER THEIR TRAINING, THEY WILL JOIN YOU AS FELLOW PROFESSIONALS DEVOTED TO IMPROVING THE HEALTH STATUS OF ALL AMERICANS. I THINK IT IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT FOR THE MILITARY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS THERE TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE APPROACH TO MEDICAL CARE TAKEN BY UNIFORMED BUT NON-MILITARY PHYSICIANS AND OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.

THE SAME CAN BE SAID -- AND UNDERSCORED -- REGARDING THE SIX FACULTY MEMBERS WHO ARE PHS OFFICERS. THEIR PRESENCE AND PHILOSOPHY CONTRIBUTES ALSO TO THE LEAVENING EFFECT OF THE PHS IN THAT UNIVERSITY.

I BEGAN THESE REMARKS BY NOTING THE LACK OF A COMPLIMENTARY PRESS THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE TENDS TO GET IN THIS COUNTRY. YET, WE STILL TEND TO ATTRACT FROM THE PUBLIC SOME OF THE BEST, MOST DEDICATED TALENT THAT IS AVAILABLE.

AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO ATTRACT THEM, BECAUSE -- REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE ORGANIZATIONAL PLANS MAY BE DOWN THE ROAD, AND NONE OF THEM ARE FIXED IN CONCRETE YET -- I BELIEVE THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A STRONG COMMISSIONED OFFICERS CORPS AND A SURGEON GENERAL OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE.

HISTORICALLY, THE ROLE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL HAS BEEN VARIED, BUT OVER TIME WE CAN SEE THAT IT HAS BEEN THE SURGEON GENERAL WHO HAS HAD SIGNIFICANT -- EVEN MAJOR -- INFLUENCE UPON THE ATTITUDES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CONCERNING HEALTH. I BELIEVE THIS WILL REMAIN AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE IN THE MONTHS AND YEAR AHEAD.

IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO THINK OF ATTITUDES PURELY IN PROGRAMMATIC TERMS. WHEN THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TOOK TO HEART THE MESSAGES OF THE PAST CONCERNING IMMUNIZATION, ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS, THE DANGERS OF SMOKING, THERE WERE PROGRAMS READY TO PROVIDE SUPPORT. BUT CHANGE WOULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE BECAUSE OF THE FORCE OF THE IDEAS EXPRESSED, THE SENSE OF URGENCY AND SCALE IMPARTED, AND THE GENERAL READINESS OF THE AMERICAN

PEOPLE TO WANT TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH STATUS.

LET ME SHARE WITH YOU THREE CONCERNS OF MINE THAT I BELIEVE OUGHT TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BY PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERSHIP.

FIRST, I THINK WE HAVE TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THIS COUNTRY AND RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RISE IN THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE ENTERING THE RANKS OF THE AGING. FURTHER, WE NEED TO DEVELOP FOR OURSELVES AN ATTITUDE TOWARD AGING. THIS WOULD INCLUDE A NUMBER OF PRECEPTS, SUCH AS METHODS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR AGING POPULATION.

THE ADVANCES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE IN UNDERSTANDING CERTAIN TYPES OF SO-CALLED SENILE DEMENTIA COULD KEEP AT LEAST ONE SEGMENT OF OUR AGING POPULATION INDEPENDENT, HAPPIER AND SELF-SUFFICIENT FOR A LONGER TIME THAN IS CURRENTLY PRACTICED AND WOULD REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO ARE SHUNTED INTO NURSING HOMES.

WE NEED TO DEAL WITH THIS ATTITUDINAL CHANGE RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RAISE A GENERATION OF NURSES AND PHYSICIANS AND OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO RESPECT THE ELDERLY AND WHO UNDERSTAND THEIR POTENTIAL.

WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT IF YOU REACH THE AGE OF 65 IN THIS COUNTRY AND YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ADMITTED TO A NURSING HOME, THERE IS ONLY A 20 PERCENT CHANCE THAT THAT WILL HAPPEN SOMETIME IN YOUR REMAINING YEARS OF LIFE. THE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF A MALE OF THAT AGE IS ABOUT 12 ADDITIONAL YEARS AND FOR A FEMALE, ABOUT 15 ADDITIONAL YEARS.

WHEN WE CONSIDER THIS LIFE EXPECTANCY POTENTIAL, THEN IT IS POSSIBLE FOR US TO THINK OF PREVENTIVE HEALTH MEASURES DIRECTED TOWARD THAT OLDER SEGMENT OF OUR POPULATION. ANOTHER EXAMPLE IS THAT OF THE 65-YEAR-OLD PERSON WHO HAS SMOKED TWO PACKS OF CIGARETTES A DAY -- AND THEN STOPS. THAT PERSON WILL SEE HIS OR HER PULMONARY FUNCTIONS RETURN TOWARD NORMAL. OF COURSE, IF THERE IS ALREADY THE BEGINNING OF A BRONCHOGENIC CARCINOMA, THE ACT OF QUITTING CIGARETTES WILL NOT REVERSE THE SITUATION.

THE OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL CAN ALSO PLAY A ROLE, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, IN MAKING LIFE FOR HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS AS EXCITING AND AS SATISFYING AS IT CAN BE FOR THE ABLE PERSON. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT DURING THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE DISABLED PERSON, IN WHICH WE ARE PLAYING A PROMINENT ROLE.

FINALLY, I THINK THE SURGEON GENERAL CAN BE VERY INFLUENTIAL

IN STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR. WE HAVE INNUMERABLE PRIVATE AGENCIES FOR HEALTH CENTERED AROUND INDIVIDUAL DISABILITIES OR DISEASE CONDITIONS OR AROUND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE SUBJECT TO THOSE DISEASES AND HANDICAPS. WHAT A MARVELOUS OPPORTUNITY NOW EXISTS FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES TO WORK TOGETHER -- PARTICULARLY AT A TIME OF GREAT FISCAL AUSTERITY. EACH NEEDS THE TALENT AND EXPERIENCE OF THE OTHER TO GET OUR JOB DONE -- AND THAT IS, TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH STATUS OF THIS NATION.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEXT FEW YEARS WILL BE NO EASIER THAN THE LAST FEW. THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE WILL STILL BE AN EVOLVING ROLE -- CHANGE IS THE MOST CONSTANT ELEMENT WE HAVE. AND THROUGHOUT IT ALL, I KNOW WE WILL CONTINUE TO DRAW UPON THE BEST THAT IS IN OUR SOCIETY, EVEN AS WE GIVE TO SOCIETY THE BEST THAT IS IN US.

THE PROGRAM FOR THIS 16TH ANNUAL MEETING IS A VARIED ONE, DEALING WITH MANY ASPECTS OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE. I TEND TO THINK THAT, BENEATH IT ALL, WHETHER YOU ARE IN THE UNIFORMED COMMISSIONED CORPS OR A GENERAL SCHEDULE CIVILIAN

EMPLOYEE, YOU SHARE THE SAME COMMITMENT TO SERVICE AND EXCELLENCE THAT THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE DISPLAYED TO ME OUT AT BETHESDA.

I AM PLEASED AND PRIVILEGED TO BE WITH YOU THIS AFTERNOON. AND I WILL CONTINUE TO FEEL THIS WAY LONG AFTER THIS MEETING HAS ENDED.

THANK YOU.

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